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Russian Newspaper Denies Spy Charge Facing U.S. Officer

MOSCOW, Sept. 30 — A Soviet newspaper denied today that an American Air Force officer accused of unauthorized contacts with the Soviet Embassy in Washington ever entered the embassy or passed any "strategic military secrets."

Sovetskaya Rossiya charged that the case involving Second Lieut. Christopher M. Cooke was concocted by the American Government to frighten Americans against seeking business contacts with Soviet officials.

The article was an unusual departure from the silence the Kremlin usually maintains on cases involving foreigners charged with spying for the Soviet Union. Under the headline "Kitchen of Spy Scandals," Sovetskaya Rossiya also charged an increase in efforts to lure Soviet diplomats in the United States into compromising contacts.

Sovetskaya Rossiya contended that the United States Department of Defense had devised an elaborate hoax because "the special services, apparently, desperately needed a provocation at that moment to whip up a new wave of anti-Sovietism."

Account in Soviet Article

No person named Christopher Cooke ever visited the Soviet Embassy, the newspaper said. Rather, the article said, a man named Mark Johnson en-

tered the embassy, wandered about its halls, picked up some brochures and casually walked out.

"Thus was born the case of 'the Soviet spy Cooke,'" said Sovetskaya Rossiya. "That it was all a charade is obvious. The American press later announced that Cooke may not stand trial. It is difficult to believe that the anti-Soviets would miss the chance to play out the trial farce if Johnson or Cooke had not been paid agents of the special services."

Lieutenant Cooke, who was deputy commander of the crew of a Titan 2 intercontinental ballistic missile at McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas, has been accused of making unauthorized visits to the Soviet Embassy from December 1980 to May 1981, when he was taken into custody by Air Force investigators. Air force rules require that contacts with representatives of Communist countries be reported.

The lieutenant reportedly told investigators that he had passed sensitive data to Soviet diplomats in the visits. Air Force officers said that, as a result, they were forced to change targets and codes for some missiles.